

IT IS DARK IN THE BUSH

(Continued from previous page)

"Rather. He went quite mad. He jumped up and seized Mrs. Marsden, who was just going to make Judith some fresh tea, and whirled her round the room and then hugged her. We all laughed and Judith said, 'But I make one condition, Mrs. Marsden has got to come to town to see us married.' Then she turned to Mr. Murray and said, 'Of course I'd love it if Uncle George would come, too! (it was the first time she'd called him that and he just beamed); but somebody has to stay here and chaperone Ann—so I make the condition that Mrs. Marsden represents the family.'"

"Curious her being so keen on the old girl. I know she likes Mrs. Marsden, but Judith always said there was only one way to do the job, just to walk into a church one day and say, 'Let's get married' and not have a soul there that you know."

"Well, she isn't having anyone else. You see, her people are all away at the beach still and she says it would be silly to drag them home just for that."

"And yet she prances to the altar attended by John's old nurse—talk about sentimentalism; why, it's positively Victorian."

"Oh, but Mrs. Marsden's a lot more than John's old nurse. You know that, darling; you're just being tiresome. And you're not fair to Judith. It's nonsense to try to make out that she ever poses. Judith's always just herself."

"Maybe. Well, get on with the story, my child. What did Mrs. Marsden say? I do hope she ran true to form and remarked, 'Really, John, you must let me make Judith some tea.'"

"Well, she didn't. It was rather queer—I almost thought she was going to cry for one moment, if you could imagine her doing that."

"I couldn't. You're a sentimental little idiot. You were probably crying yourself."

"I wasn't. I wouldn't have dreamt of doing anything so selfish. Yes, I suppose I was wrong, because she is so utterly unemotional. Still, you know, she's really fond of John. Anyway, her face did crumple up for a moment and she turned away from us all; Judith said something quickly and no one noticed but me. When she turned back she was just as usual and smiled and said, 'Well, if I must, I must—though I do think it's Mr. Murray's place to go. However, it all fits in very nicely, because I really must go to a dentist.'"

"That was one in the eye for Judith. Did she mind?"

"Not a bit. She seemed pleased, though I'd have been hurt if anyone had coupled my wedding with a visit to the dentist. She was just going to the slide for some toast and as she passed Mrs. Marsden I saw her catch her hand and give it a little squeeze. But John roared with laughter and said, 'That's the spirit, Marsy. Trust you not to get excited over a little thing like a wedding. If once you did, I'd know for sure that the world was coming to an end.' She smiled at him and said placidly, 'Now, be a good boy and let me get on with my work. If I'm going away this morn-

ing there are things I must see to.' Do you know David, I like Mrs. Marsden, but she'd drive me mad if I were John and Judith. I do like people to have a little feeling. And so they've all gone and left me in charge of you and Mr. Murray."

"Well, I've got you to myself at last. I wish they'd stay away for months."

"But, David, you're not forgetting that there isn't much time? There's less than a week now."

"Till the trial? Sweetheart, was I likely to forget? What are the others doing about that?"

"Mrs. Marsden will be back in time to go with us. The other two will meet us there."

"That's settled, then, and we needn't talk about it. Let's make the most of our few days. What are you going to do now?"

"Sew. You can sit and talk while I patch, because I hate sewing. And it's such a huge tear—just look at it! Mrs. Marsden always says that John's hard on his clothes and Mr. Murray isn't, but this is his. I found it in his room and he must have forgotten all about it, because it was stuffed right away at the back of his chest of drawers. Fancy Mr. Murray being so careless! If I hadn't dropped his collar stud while I was dusting I'd never have found it. How on earth did he come to tear his shirt sleeve like that?"

But David was not listening to Ann, for once. He was staring at the shirt she had spread on the table. It was soft and silky and all one sleeve was ripped and torn.

"It looks as if someone had tried to pull it out, doesn't it? Or as if he had been having a fight—if you can picture Mr. Murray doing anything like that. Why, David, what's the matter? You're quite pale. I'm sure you're getting influenza."

He spoke slowly and painfully. "I'm not ill, dear. Only disappointed. I thought we'd have a splendid time together and now I've just remembered the most beastly business in town."

"Business in town! Oh, David!"

"Darling, don't look like that. You don't feel nearly as upset as I do. Fact is, I've been a fool. There's something that I ought to have thought of long ago. No, I can't explain just now—but I've simply got to buzz off on the old bike right away. I won't even wait to say good-bye to Mr. Murray. You'll explain, won't you? Never mind, my dear—we'll meet in town in five days and meantime I'll ring you every evening."

Ten minutes later he was closing the Te Rata gates behind him; he gave one glance at the old house where he had been so happy, then turned his face resolutely to town. "And this time the police will have to listen to me," he said grimly.

CHAPTER XXV.

Morgan shook his head and looked with a certain pity at the eager face of the young man who sat on the opposite side of the table.

"They can't make an arrest on that."

"You mean that you think there's nothing in it?"

"My dear boy," said the lawyer patiently, "what I think has unfortu-

nately nothing to do with it. It's a question of what action the police may think fit to take or not take, and I tell you they can't arrest a man on the hypothetical case you've made out."

"But don't you see how it all fits in? Nobody knows where George Murray was on the afternoon of the murder; he could easily get up to Langley's place and back without anyone seeing him. He's had as much access as he wanted to the farm ever since and ample opportunity for getting rid of the papers. He must have followed me last night and thought I'd found something of importance that he'd overlooked. I'm perfectly certain it was him I struggled with in the cottage; it was the powerful arm of a strong man. Last of all, there's the shirt, torn like that and hidden away until he had a chance of destroying it."

The lawyer smiled whimsically. "It only remains to prove that George Murray once possessed a shirt made of grey green linen. After all, why not? It's an unlikely colour for a shirt, but they go in for queer shades nowadays and the actual material might as well have come from a shirt as a woman's dress. None of us ever took that much into consideration, but why not?"

(To be continued next week)



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